

IN SUPPORT OF PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE : SB 1 and HB 5003

Dear Co-chairs Fonfara and Rojas, Ranking members Witkos and Davis, and honorable members of the Finance Committee,

I am writing in strong support of SB 1 and HB 5003 which will establish a paid family and medical leave system in Connecticut. Connecticut families need to be able to take time off to care for themselves or a loved one without the additional stress of financial loss. Surveys show that a majority of Americans are not prepared for a \$400.00 emergency, how can we expect them to take time off from work when spouses, children, or parents are in need of assistance.

As an occupational therapist with the Visiting Nurses and Health Services of Connecticut, I see first hand what a difference having an adult child who is able to take time off to care for a parent makes. Adults who come home from illness, surgery, hospitalization from a fall, or exacerbation of a chronic illness generally need 24/7 assistance for a period of weeks or months before returning to their prior level of functioning. Very few people can afford hundreds of dollars a day for private care. Children often struggle to piece together a schedule that keeps their parent safe, but at a great sacrifice to themselves and their families. When some of the family members live in other states or across the country the difficulties in caring for the parent can seem insurmountable. Paid family leave would allow one or two family members to provide consistent care without the stress of scheduling and loss wages.

When my own parents who lived in Florida were disabled from accidents and illness, a paid family leave program would have allowed me to stay and help them. As it was, I could only use my vacation time and have always felt I let them down by not being there for as long as they needed me.

Other states have passed and implemented successful paid leave programs, Massachusetts in July of 2018. These programs have been shown to help companies retain workers and would help Connecticut businesses be competitive with neighboring states. Businesses would not be asked to fund the program, it would be funded by small contributions of approximately 0.5% of weekly earnings by employees.

I urge you to support SB 1 and HB 5003 and pass it during this session. Connecticut families need this and it will help our businesses too. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Janet Bellamy, M.ED., OTR/L CKTP  
11 Sunset Drive  
Ashford, CT 06278  
Jbellamy23@yahoo.com